

Boston University

OpenBU

<http://open.bu.edu>

Greene Scholars Creative Team

Graphic Design

2017-11

Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony (African Studies Library handout)

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/37757>

Boston University

AFRICAN STUDIES LIBRARY

775 Commonwealth Avenue,
Mugar Library 6th floor
Boston , MA 02115
617.353,3726 ph



For further information, please consult the following resources.

1. Coffee Ceremony in Ethiopia in Focus. [by] Paulos Milkias. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011.
2. All About Coffee. by William H. Ukers. New York: The Tea and Coffee Trade Journal Company, 1922. The Project Gutenberg EBook available at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/28500/28500-h/28500-h.htm>
3. Coffee, Culture and Intellectual Property Rights: The Case of Ethiopia, Lecture at the Library of Congress, Middle East & North Africa division, 2011. Podcast video available at <https://youtu.be/ygkqs2aPxkE>
4. What is the Coffee ceremony [by] Buna Café - New York. Accessible at <http://whatisthecoffee ceremony.com/>
5. The Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony In America in Sprudge. January 24, 2017. By Naomi Tomki. Accessible at <http://sprudge.com/ethiopian-coffee-110910.html>
6. Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony. In the Spruce February 26, 2017. By Lindsey Goodwin. Accessible @ <https://www.thespruce.com/ethiopian-coffee-ceremony-765830>
7. The Transmediation of "A Culture Of Coffee". A Prezi project. by Metasebia Yoseph. <https://prezi.com/lbupbxbp38fx/the-transmediation-of-a-culture-of-coffee/>
8. Being a Good Ethiopian Woman: Participation in the "Buna" (Coffee) Ceremony-Identity. by Jennifer A. Brinkerhoff . PhD Dissertation - Arizona State University. 2011.

ETHIOPIAN COFFEE CEREMONY



Coffee looms large in Ethiopia in terms of its economic, historical and cultural significance. It is a major cash crop for export providing over 60 percent of foreign currency earnings to the country. It is an integral part of the daily social life for average household.

Social significance of Coffee in Ethiopian Culture

Ethiopians do not drink Coffee alone especially in the home environment. Coffee making and drinking coffee alongside friends and neighbors provides means of socializing, communicating news and sharing of views whatever good or bad happened around the neighborhood. An invitation to attend a coffee ceremony is a common symbol of friendship between neighbors and performing the ceremony for a guest is a sign of respect.

Tidbits of Coffee History

- Coffee plant is indigenous to Ethiopia.
- The etymology of the word 'coffee' is traced to the Turkish word 'kahve', which in turn evolved from Arabic qahwah. Ethiopians maintain that the Arab merchants who spread the beans into Arabia & beyond named the bean after 'Kaffa' the mountain-forest region in Ethiopia where the plant grows in the wild & in abundance.
- There are various legends around the discovery and propagation of Coffee in Ethiopia. The most widely circulated story involves the accidental discovery by a goat herder called Kaldi.
- There are various legends around the discovery and propagation of Coffee in Ethiopia. The most widely circulated story involves the accidental discovery by a goat herder called Kaldi.
- Its spread to the wider world was slow and its progress to major European urban centers was not until the latter part of 15th century. The slow progress is due to the opposition it faced from mosque and church leaders.
- In its native land Ethiopia, it faced opposition and suspicion by religious leaders, hence it did not gain wide popularity until the turn of the last century.

3 rounds of serving:

'Abol' which means the 'First' or the 'most fresh' is strongest and is the one invited guests should not miss. The host or performer will pass around 'sini' filled with freshly brewed coffee.

The second brew which is called 'Tona' in some region and 'hletegna' (second) in urban centers and which is relatively milder is served and passed around.

The third serving which is called 'bereka' is then served and passed around. Some guests may skip 'bereka', children are then allowed to drink this mildest brewed coffee.



The coffee ceremony provides the following experiences to its participants:

- The **ceremonial/visual** experience: The staging before the coffee ceremony, the rekebot with its aligned sinii & the grass layers under it. The plates with snacks such as qolo or 'popcorn' - meant or serve to provide appetizing sights to participants.
- The **aroma or the fragrance** experience: The burning of frankincense in the staging and throughout the ceremony; the heavenly aroma that comes out when the washed beans are roasted which will be shared to participants by the host or performer of the ceremony add to the inviting sight experience in anticipation of the Coffee.
- The **savoring** experience gained from tasting/drinking the prepared coffee and from eating accompanying snacks.
- The **social** experience: Neighbors or guests to talk about family or neighborly matters as well as larger community or national issues. Women participants creating bonds, sharing news about one another or their families or engaging in latest gossips.
- And finally, for some the **therapeutic** experience or the support group these women provide to one another when afflicted with loss, grief or marital problems.

5 stages of preparation and serving

Coffee preparation consists of five significant steps:

1. Washing the beans and removing husks.
2. Roasting the beans in a metal pan over small charcoal /electric stove by stirring and shaking. When the beans turn black and shining, the aromatic smell from the smoke is passed around for attendants to smell. Some attribute meaning to this ritual to a belief of sharing good fortune in the same way Hindus attribute lighting incense and offering to Gods bring fortune.
3. Grinding the roasted beans using pestle and mortar in most households and electric coffee grinder in urban affluent households.
4. Pouring the ground coffee and water in to a clay pot called Jebena to brew on the stove.
5. Pouring the brewed coffee on small cups called senii and serving the coffee by passing around the guests.

The Ritual

Coffee ceremony is a daily ritual for a large majority of households in Ethiopia. It is mostly performed by the matriarch of the house, or children and maids on the matriarch's behalf.

On average a typical Ethiopian household the ritual twice or three times a day to neighbors and to guests and it can happen any time of the day. Often-times, the participants are women, especially house wives, though men also participate at times if they are the guests.

It is important to note here Coffee ceremony may have some small variations based on regional, ethnic, class differences or personal choices especially in the type of utensils used or companion items served along coffee.

Staging for the Coffee Ceremony

